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UNHCR ACTIVITIES FINANCED BY VOLUNTARY FUNDS: REPORT FOR 1993-1994 AND PROSPOSED PROGRAMMES AND BUDGET FOR 1995

PART III. EUROPE

Section 7 - Georgia

(submitted by the High Commissioner)

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III.7 GEORGIA

Country Overview

Characteristics of the refugee and internally displaced population

1. From 1992 to November 1993, Georgia was subject to tensions among different ethnic groups and armed conflicts related to the separatist movements in Abkhazia and South Ossetia which drove sizeable numbers to leave their homes in search of protection and assistance.

2. In 1992, military clashes and the resulting instability in Abkhazia and South Ossetia had generated a displaced population of around 130,000 persons. From September to November 1993, military operations in Abkhazia produced a new flow of over 130,000 displaced persons, which brought the caseload to an estimated 260,000 internally displaced persons by 31 December 1993. Others sought refuge in the Russian Federation.

3. By May 1994, Georgia hosted approximately 300,000 refugees and displaced persons, who could be divided into six main groups.

4. The first group consists of some 200,000 ethnic Georgians who left Abkhazia, and are now mostly in the Zugdidi, Tschalenjnika, Kutaisi and Tskaltubo regions, in the western part of Georgia which is under government control.

5. The second group of 15,000 ethnic Georgians comes from South Ossetia. These displaced persons may be found in large concentrations in Tbilisi, Gori, Kareli, Khashuri and Borjomi, in the central part of Georgia, also under government control.

6. The third group of some 20,000 ethnic South Ossetians, left different regions of government-controlled Georgia to reach South Ossetia and live in the Tskinvaly and Dvaza regions of South Ossetia.

7. The fourth group of some 30,000 ethnic Abkhazians, left different regions of government-controlled Georgia (mostly Mingrelia) and the majority moved to the southern part of Abkhazia.

8. The fifth group is composed of some 25,000 ethnic Abkhazians who left their homes in Abkhazia for other parts of the same region due to hostilities.

9. The sixth group of approximately 10,000 ethnic Armenians, Russians, Greeks and Jews left their homes in Abkhazia mainly for the northern part of the same region.

10. Some 70 per cent of the displaced live in communal centres (hotels, hostels, schools). These centres are often crowded with numerous families living in

inadequate space without heat, water, toilets or washing facilities. The remainder reside in private accommodation with relatives or friends.

11. In 1993 UNHCR aimed to assist some 65,000 of the most vulnerable. By January 1994, this figure came to 150,000.

Major developments (1993 and first quarter 1994)

12. The economic situation in the country continues to deteriorate; by May 1994, the kupon, the national currency, had devalued by over 45,000 per cent since its introduction in July 1993. Statistics for the first quarter of 1994 showed that the construction industry was at a complete standstill; industrial production stood at 71.6 per cent of the total compared to the same period in 1993; and agriculture and livestock production had decreased by some 50 per cent. The number of unemployed has doubled since last year. Acute shortages of gas and fuel are forecast by the Government for the coming winter.

13. Under the auspices of the United Nations, facilitated by the Russian Federation and observed by the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), a Quadripartite Agreement on the Voluntary Return of Refugees and Displaced Persons was signed on 4 April 1994, as a result of negotiations between Georgia and Abkhazia.

14. This Quadripartite Agreement contains the framework for planning a voluntary repatriation, and places particular emphasis on the deployment of peace-keeping forces at the start of the organized voluntary return programme.

15. An "Agreement on Cease-fire and Separation of Troops" which sets out the principles and procedures for the deployment of this peace-keeping force was signed in Moscow by the two parties to the conflict on 14 May 1994, and peace-keeping troops were deployed as of 15 June 1994.

16. In order to respond quickly to the forthcoming repatriation movement, the revised needs for the assistance programme in Georgia were incorporated in the Inter-Agency Appeal launched by the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) on 15 April 1994. This revision included the financial requirements for the return of 60,000 persons who are expected to return to their homes in Abkhazia by 31 December 1994, and was presented to a meeting on 27 May 1994 with DHA and donors.

Programme objectives and priorities

Internally displaced persons

17. UNHCR will continue its traditional protection role combined with certain types of assistance such as providing domestic items, rehabilitating shelters, and supporting health/nutrition and income-generation activities. By supporting these sectors, UNHCR is able to monitor the social welfare of the displaced, as well as possibilities for the integration of those unable to return to their former homes.

Returnees

18. UNHCR plans to deploy field teams to monitor the situation and disseminate information on conditions of return. These teams will develop and promote contacts inside Abkhazia, in areas of refuge, as well as between respective communities and authorities on both sides. The presence of UNHCR and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), together with that of observers of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG), is expected to increase trust, understanding and security, decrease tensions, and facilitate an immediate response to the most urgent needs. The deployment of peace-keeping forces is expected to assist in creating safe conditions which will enable UNHCR actively to promote and organize voluntary return movements.

19. Efforts will concentrate initially on the District of Gali, to which some 40,000 persons are expected to return in 1994.

20. Other priority activities will be the provision of basic assistance for domestic needs, health care, shelter and income-generation, to facilitate the reintegration of displaced persons.

Arrangements for implementation/related inputs

Internally displaced persons

21. The State Committee for Refugees and Accommodation (SCRA), established in late 1992, with the status of Ministry, has overall responsibility for matters relating to refugees and displaced persons.

22. The Government of Georgia will provide, through the state social welfare system, assistance to displaced persons, especially in the form of allowances, shelter and bread rations.

23. The Committee for Refugees (CFR), a division of the Committee for Nationalities, is the focal point for refugees and displaced persons in South Ossetia.

24. The Committee for Refugees in Abkhazia has overall responsibility for displaced persons in that region.

25. The International Rescue Committee (IRC) is in charge of the rehabilitation/reconstruction sector of the programme and will implement it through income-generation activities involving displaced persons. The IRC also procures relief supplies locally for distribution.

26. Médicos Sin Fronteras (MSF-Spain) is responsible for the medical component of the programme.

27. UNHCR and OXFAM will undertake the local purchase and distribution of relief assistance.

28. SCRA, CFR, IRC, OXFAM and MSF-Spain provide supervisory/management staff for programme activities.

29. WFP will provide the supplementary basic food necessary for 483,000 persons. These consist of internally displaced persons, members of host families, orphans, elderly single persons, disabled adults and children, female-headed households and other vulnerable groups.

Returnees

30. WFP will provide food commodities for returnees and most of the vulnerable local population in the first twelve months after their return.

31. A number of potential implementing partners have shown interest in cooperating with UNHCR in Abkhazia.

Special Programmes

(a) **Variations in planned activities in 1993**

32. As part of the United Nations Inter-Agency Consolidated Humanitarian Assistance Programme, and in coordination with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), UNHCR implemented a small emergency relief programme to assist the most vulnerable 65,000 of the internally displaced people.

33. An inter-agency coordination system involving all humanitarian organizations in the country was created with the purpose, inter alia, of sharing information regarding the distribution of relief items to avoid duplication of assistance.

34. In September 1993, an influx of some 100,000 displaced persons fleeing the conflict in Abkhazia crossed the Inguri river into Georgia. Basic humanitarian assistance consisting of domestic items and health services was given to this population in close coordination with IFRC and ICRC. In the following month, some 55,000 persons benefited from this assistance.

35. In order to improve the unreliable transport system within the country, government trucks were assigned from the central to the regional level. Arrangements made with the regional authorities to collect the assistance goods directly from the UNHCR warehouse in Tbilisi and transport them to the respective regions accelerated the process and reduced transport costs.

(b) **1994 planned implementation**

Internally displaced persons

36. UNHCR will continue to address the urgent needs of 150,000 of the most vulnerable internally displaced by providing clothing, blankets, kitchen sets, soap, detergent and heating stoves. Basic rehabilitation work, including the rehabilitation of water supply systems, will be carried out in communal centres where present conditions constitute a health hazard.

37. While displaced populations have free access to hospitals, there is a severe, nation-wide shortage of basic medicines. This is an obvious need for clothing and footwear, especially for children during the harsh winter, as heating systems remain subject to the country-wide power shortages.

38. The programme will concentrate on children (30 per cent of the caseload), elderly (10 per cent of the caseload), disabled persons (5 per cent of the caseload), pregnant and lactating women (about 2 per cent of the caseload), and traumatized women who had been subjected to physical violence.

39. Local residents who provided accommodation and food to internally displaced persons from their own resources will be included in the assistance programme, whenever feasible.

Returnees

40. During the first phase of the repatriation operation, efforts will concentrate on the District of Gali, to which an estimated 40,000 persons are expected to return. A further persons who are likely to return to other areas in Abkhazia, and 10,000 displaced inside Abkhazia who are also expected to go back to their home areas, will also be assisted.

41. Transport to their places of origin, as well as basic domestic items such as soap, blankets, kitchenware, water containers and cooking/heating stoves will be provided to returnees on a one-time basis.

42. Conditions in a reception centre on the western side of the Inguri river will be improved and support will be given to returning families to refurbish their houses and initiate agriculture and other income-generation activities to provide some impetus to reactivating the economic system.

43. In close coordination with UNICEF, WHO, the International Committee of the Red Cross and NGOs, such as MSF, assistance will be provided to support the health authorities. Basic health and hospital kits will be procured and distributed to hospitals and other health facilities in returnee areas. Some health posts and dispensaries which were damaged in the conflict will be repaired.

44. Houses and infrastructure in Abkhazia have suffered considerable damage. It is estimated that almost all returnees will need to be assisted in reconstructing parts of their houses.

45. As the presence of mines in the country, particularly along the banks of the Inguri river, poses a threat to resident and returning populations alike, publicity materials to support mine awareness in schools and village communities will be produced. Peace-keeping forces are expected to undertake most of the mine clearing.

(c) **1995 programme proposals**

Internally displaced persons

46. In 1995, it will be necessary to attend to the specific needs of those who have not returned or are unlikely to return to their homes, and attempt to find durable solutions. The following approach is planned:

(i) to continue with the care and maintenance programme, and build into it activities to improve the economic status of women, education and health of children, social counselling for traumatized people, and the living conditions of all beneficiaries; and

(ii) to look for durable solutions for the displaced through:

- negotiations aimed at conflict-resolution and a repatriation agreement; and

- resettlement in alternative locations provided by the Government, and provision of integration assistance in the new locations.

Returnees

47. If the overall security situation improves, the number of returnees will increase in 1995. More emphasis will also be placed on quick impact projects (QIPs) for income generation and cooperation with other agencies involved in medium-term rehabilitation and development.

Programme Delivery and Administrative Support Costs

(a) **Variations in planned activities in 1993**

48. A three-member team left for Tbilisi, Georgia, at the end of July 1993 and was joined shortly thereafter by an Administrative Officer and a Telecommunications Officer. All personnel, including local support staff, remained on temporary contracts, as the creation of posts was deferred until political developments, and contingent on that, UNHCR involvement in the area, became clearer. Equipment purchased for the new operation included office furniture for an office shared with other United Nations agencies, telecommunications equipment, computers, heaters, two generators and two vehicles, in addition to one already transferred from Armenia to Georgia.

(b) **1994 planned implementation**

49. Seven international and 14 local staff posts were created for the period 1 June 1994 to 31 December 1995. For geopolitical reasons, two of the international posts, in telecommunications and logistics, fulfil regional support functions. With the signing of a Quadripartite Agreement on the return of refugees to Abkhazia, a UNHCR presence was established in Sukhumi, Abkhazia, in April 1994. Three international and three local posts were therefore created. Communications equipment and two vehicles were also purchased. As with all other UNHCR Offices in the Caucasus, Georgia (including Abkhazia) has been designated a non-family duty

station owing to security considerations, poor health conditions and non-existent or unsuitable educational facilities. All international staff members are therefore entitled to mission status, mandatory absence for the relief of stress and procurement missions abroad.

(c) **1995 programme proposals**

50. A plan for UNHCR's continued involvement in the voluntary return to both Georgia and Abkhazia might entail the opening of additional offices in other towns, including Gali and Zugdidi in Georgia, and Sochi in the Russian Federation. It is foreseen that the operation will continue to be funded under Special Programmes, and expenditure is expected to be on a similar level as in 1994.

UNHCR EXPENDITURE IN GEORGIA

(in thousands of United States dollars)

1993	1994		1995	
AMOUNT OBLIGATED	ALLOCATION APPROVED BY 1993 EXCOM	PROPOSED REVISED ALLOCATION	SOURCE OF FUNDS AND TYPE OF ASSISTANCE	PROPOSED ALLOCATION/ PROJECTION
SPECIAL PROGRAMMES				
3,531.3	2,000.0	12,927.0	OTHER TRUST FUNDS	18,500.0
–	–	1,234.4	PROGRAMME DELIVERY See Annexes I a and II a	1,055.2
–	–	95.4	ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT See Annexes I b and II b	176.8
3,531.3	2,000.0	14,256.8	GRAND TOTAL	19,732.0